

Lanesborough Economic Development Committee
July 7, 2021–Lanesborough Town Hall – 5:30pm
Minutes

Attendance: Present: Barb Hassan, Chairperson. Members: Kevin Towle, Tom Voisin, Pat Hubbard
Amy Lane-Carmody, Chief Financial Officer, Town of Lanesborough. Laura Brennan, a Representative
from Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
Absent: David Vogel

- 1). **Meeting was Called to Order at 5:31 p.m. by Barb Hassan, Chairperson**
- 2). **The minutes of the June 3, 2021, meeting were reviewed and approved as corrected.** By consensus, members agreed to allow changes in the order of the agenda to accommodate our guest.
- 3). **Presentation by Amy Lane-Carmody, Chief Financial Officer, Town of Lanesborough.**
Barb asked Amy to attend this meeting to help the committee consider the ramifications of raising funds by hosting Tour De Greylock in the fall. She informed members that Town officials, elected and appointed may not raise funds. The Town can accept donations and establish a Special Revenue Account for the purpose of holding those funds. Laura Brennan, with the agreement of committee members, agreed to call Jeff Blake, Lanesborough Town Attorney to learn the parameters of what is legally permissible in this case. Laura reminded the group that it would likely take a combination of fund raising through events, grant writing and donations to get to the goal of \$400,000, the estimated cost of the Constitution Hill bridge and trail development/maintenance. Tom Voisin suggested contacting the company that donated the current bridge at Laston Park. Tom suggested organizing a Friends of Laston Park, a volunteer group that would be committed to seeing the park further developed as a natural resource and outdoor recreation destination. Pat agreed to contact the Recreation Committee to find out if they solicited funds for the scoreboards and how they manage the participation fees they collect for the sports activities they sponsor. Where does the sponsorship money go for the signs, they solicit for at the park?
- 4). **Review Status of Agenda Items from June 3, 2021.**
Barb indicated that all the agenda items from the last meeting were continued on this agenda which eliminated the need to review agenda items at this time. Members requested that this on-going agenda item be deleted from future agendas as agenda items are either completed or automatically carried forward onto the next meeting agenda.
- 5). **Business to Business Networking Event– Fall, 2021.**
Laura suggested Mantique, the new business that has opened in the old Vacation Village property on Route 7. She explained that she felt it was large enough to allow for social distancing and the owner is enthusiastically publicizing his business. Laura also suggested that LEDC recognize all the businesses that opened during COVID. Pat agreed to continue to work on the wording for certificates that could be presented to new businesses at the event. Members selected September 9, September 23 or September 30 as possible dates for the event if the owner agreed. Pat Hubbard agreed to contact him about the possibility of hosting the Fall B2B event.

6). **How Can or Should LEDC be involved in New Business Owner Complaints in the Process of Starting Up in Town?**

This topic led to a discussion about the lack of a “pro-business” climate in Lanesborough. Information about permit requirements, difficulty understanding zoning regulations and confusion about what signage is permitted are among the concerns expressed to LEDC members, by business owners. Members learned that the Town has a process for anyone, including business owners that want to make a formal inquiry or complaint. Barb agreed to find out the details and put the topic on the next LEDC meeting agenda. Laura agreed, that once we are clear about the process, she will highlight it in an article in the e-newsletter. Members agreed that the LEDC, given our mission, is the “business ambassador” for the Town and if we are to increase economic development here, the business climate needs to be more “pro-business”.

7). **Town Employee and New Business Handbooks.**

Laura and Pat agreed to continue to work on this project. The resignation of Kelli Robbins, Town Manager, may impact the ability of the town staff to have time to commit to the Town Employee version of this project.

8). **Tour De Greylock.**

After reviewing the proposed dates of other cycling events planned in the Berkshires, LEDC members agreed to target Saturday, September 24, 2022, for the first annual Tour De Greylock, the Lanesborough Signature Outdoor Recreation event. The event planning calendar will be revised and presented at the next meeting.

9). **Update on Progress of Market Analysis Phase 1 Spending.**

Laura submitted the invoices before the close of the fiscal year. Based on the market analysis, the following is a list of the ads that will be placed as part of Phase 1:

- July 11th Berkshire Backyard Vacation eblast – sent to 24,458 interested consumers who live within 100 miles of the Berkshires, 20.3% open rate (4937), 2.6% clicks. Lanesborough received the second highest clicks of any advertiser with 131.
- July 18th enewsletter to 58,058 subscribers interested in the Berkshires had a 12.5% open rate (7240), 1.6% click rate and Lanesborough had 63 clicks.T
- July 17th NYC metro eblast, sent to 1125K, open rate 13.82% (15,541, 2.38% clicks. Lanesborough had 149 clicks. The media owes us an additional 59,428 sends (their mistake) that will go out 8/4/21.

These ads are linked to Lanesborough Recreation webpage that needs updating. Laura agreed to make recommendations about what could be done to improve it since that is where people will be going to get additional information. Pat informed the committee that DPW had determined that the old drive-in movie sign at Laston Park is sound and useable. She asked if it would be possible to incorporate that sign into our digital marketing campaign. Members agreed that we want that historical sign preserved somehow. Laura asked about FY 2022 budget. It is the same as FY 2021 - \$3,700.

10). **Review Select Board Member Michael Murphy Comments at Select Board June 28, 2021, Meeting Regarding LEDC's Existence.**

Michael Murphy put a hold on the reappointment of the members of the LEDC Committee at the Select Board meeting held on June 28, 2021. His comments like “I haven’t seen any signs of true economic development”, “I would support that group operating under the auspices of

some sort of Chamber of Commerce because I think that is more in line with the activities they have done and continue to do” and “I don’t see any results that clearly demonstrate economic development.” were alarming to all members of the LEDC. Barb gave committee members an overview of the history of our group. When the Lanesborough Economic Development Plan was adopted on February 12, 2018, the committee continued to work to ensure that the plan would not just remain on the shelf and would hold people accountable for moving the Town’s economic development forward. Members resented his action as we volunteer to take on projects that move the Town forward and that are well within the scope of the plan. Committee members agreed not to give credibility to his comments by formally responding to his criticism and lack of support, instead, agreed, despite him, we will carry on with the mission on behalf of the citizens of this Town.

Barb agreed at the suggestion of committee members to put a discussion of the Baker Hill Road District and it’s impact on the economic development of the Berkshire Mall, on the August LEDC agenda.

- 11). Schedule Next Meeting of LEDC
Wednesday, August 11, 2021, at 5:30pm at Lanesborough Town Hall
- 12). Meeting Adjournment
The meeting was adjourned at 7:07pm.

Respectfully Submitted
Patricia Hubbard
Recording Secretary, LEDC